Floods in Assam

*418. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any permanent plan to protect the State of Assam from devastating floods every year;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what are the steps taken so far to prevent frequent floods in Assam?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI I.D. SWAMI): (a) Flood Management being a State subject, the flood control schemes are planned, funded and executed by the State Government themselves out of their own resources and as per their own priorities. The assistance rendered by Central Government is technical, catalytical and promotional in nature.

(b) Government of India has set up Brahmaputra Board under an act of Parliament and the Board was given the responsibility for preparation of Master Plans for the control of floods and bank erosion and improvement of drainage in the Brahmaputra and Barak Valley also giving due regards to the development and utilization of the water resources for irrigation, hydro-power, navigation and other benefical use. Accordingly the Brahmaputra Board has prepared Master Plans for Brahmaputra and Barak Valley, which have been sent to the State Government for implementation. The Master Plans *inter-alia* includes short term and long-term measures for flood management. To minimize the damages by floods, construction of large-scale reservoirs has been recommended in the Master Plan prepared by Brahmaputra Board and also the Rashtriya Barh Ayog as long-term measures. Implementation of these long term measures may take quite some time and therefore till the time the major projects are executed the other short term works like bank protection measures, drainage development schemes, run-of the river schemes etc. which when completed would contribute to the flood management in a short span of time are also in the plan.

(c) To tackle the problem of flood/erosion and drainage congestion, Government of Assam has constructed 4454km. long embankments, 850 km. long drainage channels and 660 nos. of town/village protection work so far as short term measures. Government of India has approved Pagladiya Dam Project for Rs. 542.90 crore to be fully funded under the Central Sector. The project besides irrigation of 54,160 ha. of cultivable land will also provide protection against flood to an area of 40,000 ha. with an incidental power benefit of 3 MW (Installed Capacity).

The Government of India has been extending Central Assistance to the State Government of Assam for flood control schemes since 1974-75 in the form of loan and grants. Up to March 2000 a total amount of Rs. 401.03 crore has been provided. The Planning Commission provided further, additional central assistance of Rs. 10 crore to Assam during 2001-2002. An amount of Rs. 49 crore from 1998-99 till 2001-2002 has also been released under Non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources.

Indo-Swiss Defence Ties

* 419. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to provide the details of the discussions that took place between him and his counterpart in Switzerland in terms of Indo-Swiss Defence ties?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): Raksha Mantri visited Switzerland from August 28—31, 2002 to attend and address an International Conference of Federalism and to hold talks with Mr. Samuel Schmid, the Swiss Minister for Defence. The discussions between Raksha Mantri and the Swiss Defence Minister explored areas whereby Indo-Swiss defence ties could be strengthened. Raksha Mantri also gave a detailed exposition to his counterpart of India's stance relating to the Kashmir issue. *Inter-alia,* the bilateral talks also focused on the dimensions of the Strategic and Security policies of other nations. The emerging political and security situations in areas such as Central Asia, Afghanistan, the EU etc. were also discussed.

Appointment of Retired IAF Personnel

*420. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that IAF are seriously thinking of reappointing its retired personnel to work on assignments;